

**TECHNOLOGY AS PROSTHESIS: A CRITICAL  
ACCOUNT OF MANKIND'S INVOLVEMENT WITH  
TECHNOLOGY**

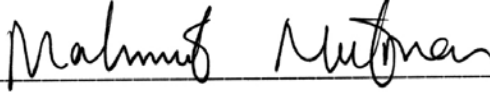
A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
GRAPHIC DESIGN  
AND THE INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS  
OF BİLKENT UNIVERSITY  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

BY

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SEPTEMBER, 2001

I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.



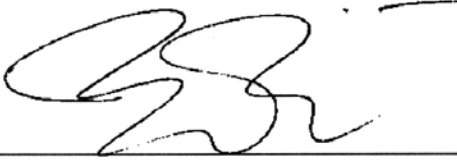
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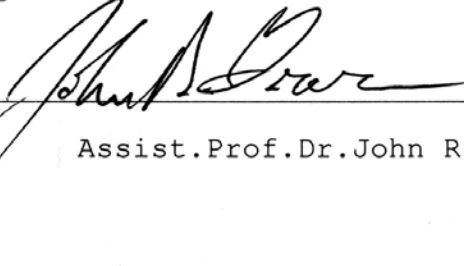
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **TECHNOLOGY AND PROSTHESIS: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT OF MANKIND'S INVOLVEMENT WITH TECHNOLOGY**

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This thesis aims to discuss the prosthetic quality of technology whilst considering prosthesis as a 'concept' in debt to a series of problematics that exceed the common definition of the word in the medical context. Departing from Freudian theory and criticism, the prosthetic quality of technology is taken into hand in relation to certain anxieties and instincts that stamp the construction of subjecthood. Additionally, the dilemma embedded in the psychical 'program' that ascribes a prosthetic quality to technology, is depicted with reference to a further discussion on technology and prosthesis.

Keywords: Prosthesis, technology, castration anxiety, death instincts, doppelgänger.

## ÖZET

### PROTEZ OLARAK TEKNOLOJİ: İNSANOĞLUNUN TEKNOLOJİYLE SÜREGELEN İLİŞKİSİNE DAİR ELEŞTİREL BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Eylül, 2001

Bu çalışma, protezi, tıp alanındaki yaygın tanımının ötesinde bir 'kavram' olarak ele almayı ve bu kavramsallaştırmayı mümkün kılan bir dizi sorunsal çerçevesinde, teknolojinin protez niteliğini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Buna göre teknolojinin protez niteliği, Freudyen kuram ve eleştirilerden yola çıkarak, öznelik kurgusuna içkin kimi endişe ve içgüdülerle ilişkili biçimde ele alınmıştır. Ayrıca gerek teknoloji gerekse protez üzerine başka bazı tartışmaların ışığında, teknolojiye kaçınılmaz olarak protez niteliği atfeden 'programın' barındırdığı sorun ve açmazlar da konu edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Protez, teknoloji, hadım endişesi, ölüm içgüdüsü, doppelgänger.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Dedicated to the memory of my father  
from whom I learned the most important lessons  
in the hardest way*

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Mahmut Mutman and my co-advisor Zafer Aracagök for it would simply be unthinkable to complete this thesis without their support and tutorship. I am also most grateful to Lewis Johnson for his gentle reminders and Nezih Erdoğan for his time as well as his kind interest in my work.

During the literature survey of this thesis, I have come across with many pictures and documentations about medical prostheses of various kinds as well as amputees some of who have been lucky enough to obtain them. As my interest in the subject shifted to another level in time, these materials have become less relevant for the scope of this thesis and consequently left untouched. Yet what I have seen and learned from these materials make it impossible for me to remain indifferent to amputees and all sorts of difficulties they face in life, including emotional pain, alienation, social discrimination and even abuse. Therefore I would like to mention my sincere sympathy for them and wish strength to all amputees and their families.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Aim of the Study

Drawing an ever-increasing interest with its rapid progress and social impacts, technology has become one of the chief concerns of the contemporary age, occupying a vast amount of literature in philosophical, sociological and media studies. Even though the diversity of studies at stake is indisputably immense to cover in brief, a plain -if not banal mapping would nevertheless lead to the questions and interests that this thesis aims to touch.

Although the wide spectrum of literature concerning technology welcomes diversity in approach and theory, some renowned discussions revolve around matters such as the ideological operations that technology rests upon and issues of instrumentality and progression as the agents of such operations on broader social and historical scale. Taking up



technology as a momentous critique of modernity, countless debates from Heidegger's 'world picture' to Habermas' claim of technology as essentially non-social and neutral, could well be illustrated as such which bring forth the question of technology either in an implicit or overt manner. However, would it be possible to cast the ideological and social engagements of technology aside and approach to the question from a rather different angle? Could technology be problematized in an alternative fashion to suggest a prosthetic and supplementary aspect in mankind's bodily, mental and even psychical involvement with technology?

In that respect, media studies and techn embodiment debates as two other topologies in concern, provide much plentiful sources and discussions to problematize the auxiliary quality of technology. With spatio-temporal relations added in focus, a number of media studies, the most prominent of which is McLuhan's *Understanding Media: Extensions of Man* (1964), take information technologies as auxiliary organs that extend the limits of human mind and perception. Debates concerning the issue of technological embodiment on the other hand, focus on

the present and future possibilities of gender and identity with respect to the human body that is powered by recent technologies of artificial transplantation and high-tech products. While the specifics of their focus may range from medico-technologies to virtual reality, bio-industries to exhausting cyborg narrations, these debates share one essential claim all the same: there is something prosthetic and supplementary about the technologies of embodiment.

Although these and such points remain to be stimulating, discussions about the supplementary and prosthetic function of certain technologies might well be raised onto another level by a number of critical questions. Instead of focusing on certain information technologies or those of embodiment, could it be argued from a critical perspective that all technological objects and innovations are prostheses by and large? If positive, would it be possible to conceptualize technology as prosthesis regardless of whether as a supplement to the very flesh and bone or to the perception and mind of the human subject? Could it be legitimate to regard technology as prosthesis not only of practical function and progressive value

but also in relation to the subject seeking an ideal image of himself?

The inquest of this work at hand is to problematize 'technology' as 'prosthesis' in such a way that would enable to discuss mankind's relationship to technological innovations and objects with reference to a deeply rooted psychical wish: the wish or illusion of becoming a 'prosthetic God' that wears various technologies as his auxiliary organs not only for practical reasons but to contend with anxieties embedded in the psychical nature of subjecthood.

Beyond the medical context in which the word puts on its literal meaning, theoretical implementation of 'prosthesis' in this study, is restricted neither to the artificial replacements for missing body organs nor to their actual attachment to the very flesh and bone of human body. Prosthesis rather stands as a concept and a figure that powerfully demonstrates the problematics of multiplicity, fragmentation and separation that are immanent to any structure, identity and construction based upon superior claims of unity, originality and order. Therefore, as it

will be discussed at length on further chapters, the concept of prosthesis inexorably reveals itself as a versatile means in many fields of criticism ranging from a post structuralist questioning of Cartesian dualities to a deconstructivist approach towards the question of writing and representation. Yet in this thesis, the concept is employed to pose a number of questions concerning technology and to discuss its prosthetic value to soothe the problematics of unity, order and accommodation that confronts the human subject through his psychical course.

Correspondingly, the perspective from which technology is handled in this thesis is restricted neither to recent technologies of embodiment nor to their practical function and/or use- value in terms of extending bodily and perceptual capacities. Instead from a wholistic approach, technology is considered to be a prosthesis by and large which serves the aims of recollecting the lost omnipotence and soothing the anxieties of self- unity that man has to bear whilst becoming a subject in psychoanalytical terms. In that respect, questions concerning castration anxiety along with fears of seperation and fragmentation, and the

problematic of death are inquired in order to discuss mankind's prosthetic relation to technology.

## 1.2. Theoretical Framework and Limitations of the Study

In order to establish a contrivance regarding technology as prosthesis, the first and foremost obligation has been to problematize the concept of prosthesis in a critical manner. Thanks to David Wills, his intense book titled *Prosthesis* (1995) along with his article *Mourning* (1998) have provided not only the first steps for such an intricate beginning but also relieved to frame the psychical moments embedded in subject's engagements with technology as prosthesis. Starting with his father's wooden leg and proceeding with verses from Virgil, a painting by Charles Conder, Freud's reservations in dealing with occultism, the problematic of translation, a film by Peter Greenaway and 16<sup>th</sup> century medicine, the book *Prosthesis* is in fact claiming a lot more about the concept of prosthesis than what just a mere psychoanalytical account would claim. Taking prosthesis as a figure illustrating the problematic of

supplementarity and unity, Wills provides a discussion on the impossibility of wholeness of whatever body and structure at stake- whether textual, rhetorical, visual and corporeal. However in doing so, Wills wittingly avoids a modest, descriptive attitude towards prosthesis as well as a lucid discussion around the concept. On the contrary, he constantly reminds the reader of his writing as an enactment of prosthesis itself (Wills, 1995: 9-11; 16; 18). Therefore, certain 'fragments' from this difficult book have been selected in order to keep Wills' discussions within a rather psychoanalytical frame. Deriving from these fragments, Wills' discussion of prosthetic operations- namely the operations of [dis/re] placement, transfer and accomodation are scrutinized with reference to subject's pychical engagement with technology. By the same token and perhaps through an easier narration this time, Wills' article *Mourning* (1998) opens up another door to seek psychoanalytic legitimacy to conceptualize prosthesis when it comes to human subject. Starting with the wooden leg of Wills' father once more, the article touches the problematic of parental framework whose structure of loss constitutes the human subject at the price of various [dis]articulations and [dis/con]

junctions of the Oedipal. These two works of Wills therefore, pay an essential contribution to the ways in which prosthesis could be problematized and discussed in the case of technology as a prosthetic means to recover subject's psychical insecurities concerning unity, loss and accomodation.

Following the critical conceptualization of prosthesis, the next echelon for the theoretical framework would be the contention of the psychoanalytical plot in which why's and how's behind subject's engagement with technology as prosthesis could be brought up. In that respect, other 'fragments' from the book *Prosthesis* (1995) are selected since their focus on certain texts of and about Freudian analysis has been more than helpful to set such a plot. Evenmore, some of those texts employed in Wills' appraisal of Freudian literature have been taken as individual references in this thesis, to grasp those psychical moments directing human subject into a prosthetic relation with technology.

E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *The Sandman* (1817; 1982) and Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919; 1986) are the two of

these texts. Kofman's compelling account on *The Sandman* is another (1991), in which she criticizes Freud's analysis of the story in *The Uncanny*. While our contemporary age offers numerous technological innovations and cyberpunk imagination, *The Sandman* as a typical example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic literature may not appear to be the perfect pick at first glance, for a discussion on technology as prosthesis. Meanwhile, Freud's interest in the story is limited to exploring the ways in which castration anxiety- symbolized as the fear of loosing one's eyes in the story, could be argued as a universal case of the uncanny. Yet, Kofman's alternative analysis of *The Sandman*, pluralist in the sense of bringing the other themes of the story into an equal consideration, has turned this Romantic piece into a major reading for this thesis. With Kofman's suggestion of a linkage between the themes of castration, fear of seperation/fragmentation, death and doppelgänger in the story, an analysis of *The Sandman* has enabled to adress those pyschical moments that direct subject's relation to technology as prosthesis. Accordingly, mankind's involvement with technology as prosthesis is problematized as a projection of the subject's vain quest to possess an ideal image of himself as



omnipotent and intact- an ideal related to the disturbance of castration anxiety and fear of separation/fragmentation.

As further exploration of the concept prosthesis has indicated, an attempt to problematize technology as prosthesis would be incomplete if one misses the essential dilemma embedded in the psychical course of human subject: the dilemma of mortality. But where exactly do technology as prosthesis and the problematic of death meet? If the psychoanalytical reasoning mentioned above is continued, would it be possible to argue technology as that prosthesis which promises a *return* to a state of imaginary unity and omnipotence lost after the encounter with castration threat? For the same psychoanalytical reasoning suggests a strong relation between castration anxiety and fear of separation/ fragmentation, would it be possible to approach technology as that prosthesis in the service of death instincts that deny the reality of separation and difference revealed by castration threat? To handle these questions, Freud's theory of instincts have been scrutinized with reference to his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920; 1961) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930; 1986).

Although harshly neglected for a number of reasons and kept out of focus after Freud, a systematic re-evaluation of death instincts in Brown's *Life against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (1985) have eased to position death instincts within the teoretical framework of the study.

Last but not least, a few more reminders, additional to those made in the beginning of this chapter, need to be made regarding the way technology is issued in this thesis. True to the extent that, taking technology as a monolithic entity has become a less plausible approach since the increasing variety in the field of technology requires an awareness of the diversity and particularity of *technologies* with regard to their specific contexts and implementations. However, the use of the word 'technology' throughout this thesis points neither to an understanding of technology as a monolithic entity nor to a blindness to the importance of the authentic contexts and implementations of particular technologies. Far from an aim of presenting a criticism of technology, this thesis rather aims to hold a discussion about the possibility of ascribing a prosthetic quality to technology with reference to a set of psychoanalytical

motifs behind subject's engagement with it. In that respect, although a specific focus on recent technologies may seem to be much more appropriate to set examples for mankind's prosthetic relations with technology, no specific examples as such have been examined in this thesis. On the contrary, Don Ihde's *Technology and The LifeWorld: From Garden to Earth* (1990), is referred to for a depiction of technology broad enough for raising a discussion regarding its prosthetic quality.

Concisely, the theoretical navigation of this thesis employs could be summarized as selected series of psychoanalytical concepts and discussions of and about castration anxiety, fear of separation/fragmentation, double/doppelgänger and death instincts along with the basic arguments regarding the concept of prosthesis and technology.

### 1.3. Chapters in Brief

Following Introduction, the critical conceptualization of prosthesis and preliminary remarks concerning the prosthetic possibility of

technology are issued in Chapter 2. This chapter begins with the history of prosthesis in mythology and medicine gathered from a number sources dealing with the very first historical cases of prosthesis, its employment by various mythological figures and medical advancements in the realm of prosthetics through time. The reason for taking such a start is not only to present prosthesis with a hopefully interesting beginning, but rather to show that prosthesis has always already been complementary to the [re]construction of subjectivity as much as that of bodily unity. With reference to Wills' conceptualization of prosthesis, the discussion is proceeded on human subjectivity and its employment of prosthetic framings to abandon the innate anxieties of unity, completeness and order. Chapter 2 ends with an argument of technology in regards to Ihde to illustrate that prosthetic relations are inescapably inherited in every engagement with technology.

Deriving from his powerful metaphor of Garden of Eden, Ihde argues that from the moment Adam and Eve were condemned from the Garden and exiled to Earth, the word 'human' has become graspable in its proper meaning: the deficient mortal with the everlasting

problem of adaptation (Ihde, 1990: 12- 13)- or rather with the problem of transfer into the otherness if one wishes to recall Wills here (1995: 12-13). Within the enclosure of this metaphor, Ihde argues that human life has been conditioned by technology since the very beginning. From a different perspective though, the metaphor at stake serves a linkage to Chapter 3 in which the relation between Thanatos and technology-as-prosthesis is discussed.

Drawing a distinction between a 'suicidal tendency' and the operation of Thanatos, this chapter questions to what extent technology serves the retrospective foreclosure of death instincts: that is the denial of separation. Beginning with an outline of Freud's both early and late theory of instincts, the chapter continues with Brown's criticism of Freud's dualist structure of instincts as Eros vs Thanatos. Brown's argument is that the two instincts lean on each other in a dialectic fashion rather than struggling in a dualism (1985: 82-86). Since this dialectic account of Brown also brings the long neglected theory of death instincts up to front, his alternative reading carries further significance to cast aside possible criticism regarding the

problematization of Thanatos [and *not* Eros] in the realm of this thesis. After an assessment of these points, technology is discussed as that prosthesis serving the retrospective project of Thanatos: a return to and/or the recovery of a state that was disturbed by the subject's encounter with the unavoidable separation and fragmentation.

Although each chapter of this study is designed to enfold one layer of the theoretical discussion at stake, Chapter 4 precisely amasses the concepts and debates put forth in previous chapters. Taking Hoffmann's story *The Sandman* as a generous text to trace subject's psychical engagement with the concept of prosthesis, the chapter begins with the abstract of the story. Subsequently, the themes of castration anxiety and doppelgänger in the story are taken into consideration with reference to Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919; 1986) and two critical accounts of this text by Kofman (1991) and Weber (2000).

The significance of Kofman's account for the inquest of thesis is that it presents a possible association between castration anxiety and employment of doppelgänger through the death instincts (1991:

158-160). Since the castration anxiety induces the fear of separation and fragmentation, it is equally a threat to subject's ideal image of himself as omnipotent. In addition, as the instances in the story *Sandman* reveal, employment of doppelgänger serves to a narcissistic attempt of the subject to recover what he has lost in his encounter with the threat of castration (1990: 143-145). In that respect, Kofman's pluralist reading of the themes in *The Sandman* is treated to consider doppelgänger as prosthetic in general and technology as a prosthetic doubling in specific.

On the other hand, Weber's account of the story carries significance to put forth the impasse of the program of technology-as-prosthesis. True to the extent that the uncanny involvement of Nathanael [the main protagonist of the story] with some spyglasses can be regarded as prosthetic since what he obsessively tries [and fails] to see through the glasses is the ubiquity of the male sexual organ. On the other hand, "what the prosthesis brings closer is the inescapability of separation: the separation of eyes from sockets, of the perspective from that which it reveals and that which sees through it" (Weber,

2000: 18- original emphasis). In other words any prosthesis, including technology, is doomed to fail in its attempt to unify and restore since its double nature already implies fragmentation. Therefore, the relation between castration anxiety, doppelgänger and death instincts is problematized in Chapter 4 to display the program of technology -as-prosthesis in two folds: the psychical motivation behind the program and how this program unavoidably fails.

Conclusive remarks and possible questions for a further study are put forward in the final chapter of this thesis.



## CHAPTER 2. PROSTHESIS AND TECHNOLOGY: FORMULATION AND SCOPE

Prosthesis: An artificial replacement for a missing body part, or a device designed to improve a specific body function. Prostheses include artificial limbs, false teeth, hearing aids, artificial kidneys, and implanted pacemakers. Recent improvements have included lighter materials, more realistic appearance, and greater flexibility, which allow a more normal continuation of daily activities, including participation in such sports such as skiing, basketball and running.

(Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 1994)

Man has, as it were, become a kind of a prosthetic God. When he puts all his auxiliary organs he is truly magnificent; but those organs have not grown on to him and they still give him much trouble at times.

(Freud, SE XXI, 1986: 91- 92)

Prosthetics- The castration complex raised to the level of an art form.

(Ballard, 1992: 271)

But all that functions only because of prosthesis, because the parts were always already detachable, replaceable, because the transfer effect upon which the general is constructed is there at the very beginning, in the nonintegrality of that beginning, called prosthesis.

(Wills, 1995: 15)

## 2.1. The History of Prosthesis in Mythology and Medicine

A classical approach to prosthesis would begin with the classical assumption that it is a device, an artificial construction designed and utilized to supplement an organ and/or function being lacked. Such an assumption would call into mind an equally classical example of prosthesis within the realm of the medical. Even though today's medicine, in an interdisciplinary collaboration with various fields of science, engineering and technology presents numerous advancements in prosthetics such as implantations of aluminum plates to support skeletal system, epiretinal prosthesis with mechanical properties, or penile implantations, it is still the artificial limb that is recalled when the word 'prosthesis' is at hand. Perhaps such a recalling is not missing the mark as much as one would think it does.

Ever since the very dawning of science and medical thought, limb prosthesis has been the earliest field of prosthetics to exist and to be developed in the history of mankind. The early civilizations of Greece, Egypt and Rome provide a rich history of first true rehabilitation aids recognized as prosthesis, which serve for various reasons such as physical function, cosmetic appearance

and even for the maintenance of the wholeness of the human body in psycho-spiritual sense. Although the tradition of oral history as a common feature shared by many ancient civilizations makes it quite difficult to date the very first prosthesis in time, poems, myths and epic as well as the archeological findings nevertheless reveal the interesting fact that prosthesis has always been on the agenda of mankind. Among the cases of amputee gods in the mythologies of various civilizations, one of the most remarkable examples occur to be the Celtic Irish God New Hah, being a left arm amputee with a silver prosthesis (Padula and Friedmann, 1987 cited in Northwestern University Prosthetics Orthotics Center<sup>1</sup>, 2001). Another example is Pelops, the grandson of Zeus and son of Tantalus, who comes back to life with a prosthetic ivory shoulder, marking the eventful story of his death (Romm, 1988 cited in NUPOC, 2001). An equally remarkable finding would be from Rig- Veda, an ancient sacred poem of India written in Sanskrit between 3500 and 1800 BC. Recounting the story of a warrior, Queen Vishpla, who lost her leg in a battle and returned back to the field with an iron prosthesis fitted, Rig- Veda is said to be the first written record of a prosthesis, discovered so far (Sanders, 1986 cited in NUPOC, 2001).

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<sup>1</sup>To be referred to as NUPOC hereafter.

In addition to such mentioning of prosthesis in the examples of oral history, archeological findings reveal the Egyptian mystery of prosthetics, being a common practice of attaching artificial body parts made of wood or leather, to dead bodies of amputees as a preparation for their after- death. However, the archeological survey run in Thebes-West exposed not another case of prosthetics realized in the same fashion, but a finding very much significant for the history of prosthesis. Different than the previously found Egyptian prostheses, the marks of use and abrasion on the sole of the prosthetic toe of this Egyptian mummy from the New Kingdom period [around 1550- 1700 BC] have indicated that the prosthetic toe had been used during the life time. While several different Egyptian prostheses ranging from wooden noses to dental wear had already been brought to light yet soon found out to be replacements arranged after death, this case in specific is recorded to be the oldest known limb prosthesis, in addition to signs of dental wear which too, proves to having been used during the body's lifetime (Nerlich et al., 2000).

From the early civilizations to our contemporary age, the history of prosthesis has been marked not only by medical and scientific progression but also by the

dynamism of various social phenomena- the most significant of which is war technologies. While the basic peg legs and hand hooks are known as the typical prostheses of Dark Ages, general innovations in war technologies of the European continent such as the use of cannon shot and gun powder by the mids of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, have brought much common use and improved design of prosthesis in those times of armor and wars (NUPOC, 2001). With the hallmark of advancements in medical scene, the masterpieces of armory of 1600s have changed in amazing scale by the 1800s, adding smooth function, easy adjustment and better appearance to designs of prosthesis (Thomas and Haddan, 1945; Romm, 1998 cited in NUPOC 2001).

Back on to the stage of human history but this time with much massive impact, Modern Warfare starting with the American Civil War and continuing with World War I and II, designated not only an equally massive demand for prosthesis but also advancements penetrating prosthetics into a newer scientific vision and technological enhancements.

If technologies and relations of warfare have been the major phenomena stamping the field of medical

prosthetics of earlier ages, it is the interdisciplinary collaborations that mark the medical prosthetics of our contemporary times. Today, researchers focus on possibilities to develop such prostheses of which automatic adaptation to the amputee would be compatible with variations in forward speed and patient size whilst reducing the problem of discrimination in social life due to unnatural seeming posture and motion. Moreover, present limb prostheses controlled and guided by its user via microchips, motors and pressure points, have started to challenge the future face of prosthetics. The most remarkable example for that would be the 'bionic' arm articulated to a patient for the first time in 1998 (The Lancet, 1999). Most recently, researchers are working to develop such prosthetic limbs that would be used not by the guidance of vision as in the usual case of amputees, but by the guidance of touch, instead. As the related research project run by MCP Hannemann School of Medicine, Philadelphia has succeeded to do so, thought controlled prosthesis based on the transmission of senses of touch to the brain [to coordinate the activity of prosthetic limb], is assumed to be a step closer to the future promises in the field of prosthetics (The Lancet, 1999).

However common such an understanding of prosthesis as a medical device might be, a critical look towards the further implications of the concept necessitates the questioning of this limited understanding of prosthesis as being ultimately medical. If one is to problematize the issue of prosthesis by expanding it as a concept beyond the fuse of flesh and steel, what would this concept imply other than a practical purpose of reinstating a missing body organ and/or function? In what ways could prosthesis be considered outside the scene of medicine and what kind of possibilities would such a conceptualization offer for criticism?

In search for answers to such questions, let us return to those mythological stories of prosthesis mentioned earlier and take the case of Pelops. According to the story, Tantalus- the son of Zeus, cuts his own son Pelops into pieces, stews his flesh and serves his dismembered body as a feast for the gods. When the gods discover this trick, they restore the dismembered body of Pelops, bring him back to life and provide an ivory prosthesis for his shoulder that has already been eaten by Demeter. In the end, Tantalus is punished by being 'tantalized' with hunger and thirst- for his crime involves the transgression of proper boundaries regarding

food. (Encyclopedia Mythica, 1995). Yet, the matter at stake in this piece of mythology could also be viewed as the problematization of boundaries in regards to the themes of body and prosthesis. In addition, just when reconsidered within that perspective, the story takes a rather interesting turn. If Pelops' body could be taken as the theme representing the human body as the prior zone for the problematic of boundaries and order, his ivory prosthesis then, occurs to imply more than just a practical device to restore his missing shoulder. On a broader and critical spectrum, the prosthesis at stake serves to maintain boundaries and order as well. In that case, where does prosthesis as a concept belong? To the realm of medicine and the surface of human body? Or to the realm of subjectivity where the human body systematically communicates those problematics of unity, boundaries and order?

If we move onto the major reference of this thesis, the discussions of David Wills, two possible postulations come at hand regarding 'prosthesis': Firstly, because the concept prosthesis reveals that the maintenance of every possible unity and boundary relies on the establishment of prosthetic relations, superior claims of self-contained completeness and order come out as equally



fictive. Secondly and respectively that, prosthesis can well be employed as a concept to question those problematics in various fields ranging from medicine to subjectivity, literature to theory.

## 2.2. From a Wooden Leg to Virgil's Verses: The Concept of Prosthesis in Wills

David Wills' book *Prosthesis* (1995) is the one and presumably the only study that inquires possibilities of theory and criticism through a critical conceptualization of prosthesis. In this fairly intense book, Wills provides accounts slipping back and forth, in and outside theory and narration, autobiography and fiction all of which build up his critical writing on prosthesis. With frequent mentioning of Wills' bitter-sweet memories of childhood with respect to bearing an amputated father, the book departs from an actual wooden prosthesis and arrives at the prevalence of prosthetic relations in every possible field from parental affairs to the problem of translation, from religion to writing. Although such a perspective consequently relieves prosthesis from its narrow dictionary definition, it is nevertheless impossible to conceive the concept without the material

body itself- with all its utterances to the problematic of subjecthood. Therefore, the wooden leg of Wills' father seems to be more than just a too much too repeated metaphor but rather serves as a gentle reminder of this obligation.

When Wills' father, an amputee with a wooden leg since the age of 18, suffers from 'phantom' pains or when the pain is felt on the way to hit, father meets the phantom pain with the following line from Virgil in Latin:

*"Quadrupendente putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum."*

which means:

"The hoof strikes the dusty plain in a four-footed rhythm" (Virgil, 1965 cited in Wills, 1995: 3).

Although being probably a routine part of his everyday life, this doomed ceremony of Wills' father promises a number of passages of which structure of loss calls the issue of prosthesis into question. First of these is Wills' purposive naming of the pain as 'phantom' and its implications about his father's body. Among other

'things' like vampires, zombies and golems which are out of the proper order yet set between the alive and dead, existent and non-existent, phantom is an undecidable thing, a floating signifier of the 'in-between'. While the uncertainty at stake in terms of the order and placement between the phantom pain and the line from Virgil is an undecidability [which precedes which: the line from Virgil preceding the pain or following it?], the relation between the phantom pain and the amputated body of Wills' father is another problem in the same fashion. For Wills, the phantom pain designates more than just an amputated body crying out loud its primacy over the everyday existence that is paralyzed by some pain shock. The pain at stake is rather a crying manifesto of the return of some repressed fears and anxieties of corruption and disassemblage that can well be generalized to the problematic of the human body (1995: 12- 15)- and possibly to the problematic of subjecthood as well. Such a manifesto which equally brings forth that the human body has already been a prosthetic ensemble, fragmented and recollected upon a unique 'economy of loss'-long before an actual amputation necessitates an actual prosthesis.

As Wills' discussion proceeds gradually, the significance of this economy of loss becomes more noticeable for a critical conceptualization of prosthesis. When Wills takes another flashback in his memories and realizes that the Child Development Center, Artificial Limb Center and Sexual Health Center of his hometown hospital were next to one another, this economy of loss behind the question of prosthesis addresses once again to the constituent of subjecthood, along with its implementations on the material body. Claiming the pediatric, the prosthetic and erotic as various articulations of the Oedipal, "how a child relates to a father defined as lack, how castration operates in terms of artificial replacement as much as in terms of amputation or deprivation (...)", Wills draws attention to the developmental process as a negotiation on a series of [dis/con]junctions, articulations and replacements that are bodily and psychically experienced (1998: 16). For the essential examples of mother's breast, the turd, the phallus and the language would demonstrate, the economy of loss at stake acts upon various prosthetic replacements that stamp the formation of subjecthood. Would not prosthesis and/or prosthetic relations then, become speakable beyond some artificial device and appear as fundamental 'transfer[s]' that are immanent to the

construction of subjecthood and the unitary conception of the body?

With reference to a specifically medical context or not, either as a medical device or as a textual 'thing', Wills argues that prosthesis is first and foremost a matter of rapid transfer (Wills, 1995: 12-15). Showing the etymological secret of the noun/verb 'transfer' with reference to the Latin in which the verb 'ferre' means 'to bear' and its past principle form being 'latum' [*ferre trans-fer trans-lation*] Wills argues that, prosthesis occurs to be a bearing onto otherness, a realm of pluralities and multiplicites, that is mediated through the body is at stake. In effect with the related operations of amputation, [dis/re]placement, substitution and supplementation, this transfer is by the same token a challenge to 'whatever- body' there is at stake. That is to say, the unitary claims of all bodies of thought, of categories, textual relations as well as frameworks could well be put into question by the concept of prosthesis. At the rear of every 'body' that reflexively relies on an a priori manifesto of being full and original, originally full, prosthesis reveals a field or a space of pluralities and multiplicities untamed. Perhaps evenmore that bodies and structures have always been matters of

that space; being fictive ensembles and therefore already prosthetic. Or rather "there never was any such event in its pure singularity and prosthesis is the idea of that" (Wills, 1995: 15).

Consequently, the critical conceptualization is that prosthesis, as much as a medical, artificial, inorganic device, is a concept, a figure, a matter of transfer, a signifier of multiplicity as well as a condition, demonstrating the transfer relations and articulations of various kinds that concurrently operate behind the construction of whatever-body in concern.

Although it is well beyond the realm of this thesis to cover them all, such a critical conceptualization would promise valuable means to discuss the immanency of prosthetic relation in various fields of thought and practice- a few but significant instances of which could be set from the prosthetic shuttles that seem to stamp Wills' parental affairs. On the one hand, there is his father with his everlasting desire of learning foreign languages yet his desire remaining unfulfilled as he had to meet the cold face and restraints of amputation at the age of eighteen. On the other hand, David Wills turns out to be a professor of French years after, himself becoming

a supplement of his father with dreams fell apart. While it is not only good command of a foreign language but an education completed with success that Wills' father once longed, Wills himself makes his way on the field of academy, with not only an education in full but also an education paying back respect and status. Yet, while his father does not have full command of any foreign language, his half Latin is adequate enough to supplement his unfulfilled desire with a line from Virgil, pronounced almost perfectly. Strangely enough, his father's sudden switch to a different language with the feeling of phantom pain remains on one side, and Wills' vain hope to provide a faithful translation of Virgil's line to English is on the other, as Wills argues that trans-lation itself is a problematic of displacement, of prosthetic (Wills, 1995: 8-15). In short, the untamed shuttles between the categories of father/son, Latin/English, Latin/ French, family/ academy, public/ private point up to that haunted space where prosthetic operations become speakable once more.

What Wills aims to demonstrate through this lengthy discussion of prosthesis could perhaps be reviewed in a few remarks. First of all, prosthesis puts forth that the the supposed unity and order of every possible body

depends on an economy of loss that actualize various prosthetic operations of [dis/re]articulation, [dis/re]placement and supplementation. In view of that, it becomes plausible to consider the acts of prosthetic relations in various fields and/or suggest a prosthetic character for countless entities. If the formation of subjecthood along with its implementations on the body is one of these, the realm of language, the question of writing, the problems of translation and representation would then be others. Secondly and yet, the uncanniness behind all this is that, while prosthesis serves for the maintenance of unity and order, it obstinately addresses to the impossibility of such maintenance. Prosthesis occurs as a rapid transfer and in that respect, it always brings the anxieties of corruption and disassemblage to the agenda.

Wills' epistemological critique provides an invaluable vision to go beyond the literal sense of the word prosthesis and question the economy of loss and transfer relations that mark the construction of bodies whether in the realm of literature, parental affairs, language or subjecthood. Then, how could this economy of loss and transfer relations be considered in the case of



technology to discuss mankind's involvement with technology as merely prosthetic?

### 2.3. Initials for a Discussion on the Prosthetic Quality of Technology

Thanks to cyberpunk imagination and popular science, the innovations and future possibilities in recent technologies of embodiment and bio- technologies have not only drawn remarkable attention among masses, but also brought a debate that soon became a chief concern in technology studies. That is the debate about the fate of human body and identity with reference to technologies offering a wired future, plugged fantasies and microchip supported body organs. While theory and criticism about 'techno-bodies' or 'cyber-identities' exhibit such a variety in tone and approach that go beyond the interest of this thesis, a few keywords would nevertheless give an idea about the common concerns that condition them all: artificiality, supplementarity and, to no surprise, prosthesis. Add the infamous arguments about the disappearance of material body, cyborg and hybridity into focus and there comes the popular technology debates in full picture. A monstrous threat to the human condition

for some, a techno- evolution to others, the future held by recent technologies is the fusion of flesh and steel in which the material body would no longer carry an ontological status of its 'natural' quality. For instance in *Panic Sex in America*, Krokors ask the question: "Why the concern over the body today if not to emphasize the fact that the (natural) body in the post modern condition has *already* disappeared, and what we experience as the body is only a fantastic simulacra of body rhetorics?" (1987: 21-22, original emphasis). On further pages following the question, the reader is invited to Baudrillard's *simulacrum*, cultural politics of advanced capitalism and Bataille's *general economy of excess* to explore the disappearance of body in hyper- modern condition. Through such different points of reference though, the basic opposition that lies under techno-body debates reveals itself still: the natural- artificial opposition. With the irresistible power of biotechnologies and computer-generated technologies of vision and representation, human body is pictured to be falling drastically into 'de-naturalization'. Along with the exteriorization effect of medical technologies, Krokors argue that human body has no chance other becoming a floating sign in the end, free of its natural quality and, obsolete instead (1987: 29-32).

Although such a picture may at first glance seem to be just perfect for a discussion on the prosthetic quality of technology, a further look at the implications beneath such a problematization of human body and technology would simply suggest the opposite. For if we return to the previous discussion on Wills' perspective, not only the unity and order claims of various bodies and entities, but also the abstract rhetorical categories that accommodate such claims could equally be questioned in the light of the concept prosthesis. Since the hierarchical categories and binary oppositions serve to fix and maintain boundaries for the approval of such claims of unity and order, is not there something prosthetic about these categories as well? To be more specific, has human body ever been in a pure state of nature at all?

As opposed to the implications of Krokers' debate, Balsamo (1995) does not quite agree with the legitimacy of natural- artificial opposition for some prophecy about the disappearance of the human body. Drawing attention to the discursive operations behind such binary oppositions and categories, Balsamo rather underlines the ideological urge to fix a hierarchy and proper order among 'things'. Accordingly, the ideological yet nevertheless out-moded

category of 'natural' body and the myth of its disappearance could become graspable only when realized that the presence of human body is nothing but a continual mapping of the social, cultural, political and *technological* discourses. In a similar fashion with Wills' statement on prosthetic operations as matters of rapid transfer, human body for Balsamo is both a product and a process, an entity under construction that continually shuttles between nature and culture, the natural and the artificial and so forth (1995: 216- 220). In other words, the prosthetic state and/or the disappearance of the [natural quality of] human body could neither be argued as a new phenomenon epidemic to some hyper-modern condition nor with respect to those technologies of embodiment only. For the human individual is borne into the social, the realm of various sign systems and codings as well as material culture, human body has been a *cyborg*, long before putting on some virtual reality gadgets or having artificial organs transplanted.

True to the extent that the word 'cyborg' and contemporary discussions around it, carry a futuristic tone and explicitly refer to the possession of technology 'under skin'. However, the word significantly designates

what the critical conceptualization of prosthesis would mean for a discussion on technology. First of all, as Wills' discussion on the economy of loss and its management through prosthetic operations have demonstrated, the question of prosthesis is not unique to some specific interaction between human body and material culture. The concept of prosthesis is equally plausible to consider the purposes of ideological accommodation behind the hierarchy and order set among discursive categories and binary oppositions. Secondly and accordingly, prosthetic relations could well be traced in various realms other than technology. Since some of these have been formerly exemplified as semiotics, the problem of translation and writing, announcing technology as *the* ultimate prosthesis would simply be unfaithful to what has been tried to put forth so far. In that respect, it should be underlined that a discussion of technology based on some fixed attributions around the opposition between natural-artificial, would simply be not a step ahead the medical meaning of the word prosthesis. The assumption of technology as prosthesis rather requires a perspective that exceeds the discursive obligations of natural- artificial debate and considers the prosthetic quality of technology on a level broader than the surface of flesh and bone.

Disregarding these binary oppositions that viciously pull the question of technology at either one end or another, Ihde's criticism of technology (1990) suggests an alternative approach towards human-technology interaction. While affirming the rapture between the implementations of technologies of the past and present, Ihde nevertheless holds the view that technology has always been on the agenda of mankind as a material aspect of culture and civilization. With various anthropological cases from Tasaday to Inuit, his argument demonstrates that even those states of mankind that are assumed to be 'primitive' and equally 'natural' have always been dependent on technology (1990: 13-15). In other words, though represented from a unique perspective of his own, Ihde's discussion points to the narrowness of a formulation of technology that is based on the well exhausted categories of binary oppositions. Instead of being dazzled with the extreme examples of applied science in the urban environment, Ihde draws attention to the ancient times in which craftworks and tool making could still be regarded as technology, however simple and minimal. Taking technology as an immemorial aspect of culture and culture as an indispensable quality of mankind, he notes, "virtually every area of human praxis implicates a technology. From burial to birth to eating

and working, the use of artifacts embedded in a patterned praxis demarcates the human within his or her world"(1990: 20). True to the extent that his disinterest in the distinctive production and industry relations as well as discursive impositions behind modern technologies makes such a general inference problematic at times. Due to the very same reason perhaps, the lack of a concrete definition of technology presents itself as another obstacle throughout the book. Yet, Ihde's interest is to show that the question of nature has never been an issue of mankind for his existence is always already "technologically textured" (1990: 1; 3). Therefore, he describes the notion of technology in the book to be a phenomenological one, navigational and relativistic in the sense that it aims to draw a framework rather than formulaic answers to the question of technology (1990: 9-10).

Although to what extent these and such ambiguities could be tolerated remains questionable, Ihde's notion of technology nevertheless holds two significant possibilities for inscribing a prosthetic quality to technology. The first of these is Ihde's "phenomenology of technics" (1990: 72) in which a rather broad perspective is suggested to problematize the issue of

technological embodiment. While the words 'technology' and 'technics' are used interchangeably in his book [and here is another problem], the word 'technics' in this case refers to a set of relations embedded in specific contexts of human- technology interaction. Accordingly in the case of what Ihde refers to as "technics embodied", technology operates as a tool that extends the material capacity of body or its senses, in such a way that the tool at stake turns out to be totally transparent, as if its material presence is withdrawn. Picking examples mostly from optical technologies of glasses and telescopes, Ihde argues that the senses of outer reality as well as one's own self perception become altered through the parameters of the object. Consequently, with the transparency of mediation involved in technics embodied, the relation at stake shifts from:

*I see-the optical artifact- the world*

towards

*(I-glasses)- see the world (1990:73-76).*

The significance of Ihde's technics embodied is that it takes the issue of embodiment on broader terms beyond the understanding of some actual attachment to the very flesh and bone- which, as presented before, is the common



case with most discussions concerning the technologies of embodiment. Thus, such a formulation enables to think on further cases of embodiment that represent a prosthetic aspect of mankind's involvement with technology. Taking Ihde's discussion a step further, Woodward (1994) argues that even the world history of civilization is shaped by such relations of embodiment that not necessarily demand an actual attachment to the flesh and bone of human body. Following the extension of the arm by the tool in agricultural revolution, has not the industrial revolution been marked by "the dexterity of human body as a whole with complex machines?" (1994: 50). Additionally, Woodward comments on the post industrial revolution in a McLuhanesque sense, with reference to information technologies as the extensions of man. For that reason Woodward notes that:

Over hundreds of thousands of years the body, with the aid of various tools and technologies, has multiplied its strength and increased its capacities to extend itself in space and over time. According to this logic, the process culminates in the very immateriality of the body itself. In this view, technology serves fundamentally as a *prosthesis* of the human

body, one that ultimately displaces the material body, transmitting instead its image around the globe and preserving that image over time (1994: 50, emphasis added).

Consequently, while the main theme behind Ihde's discussion is apparently the impossibility of a natural state for mankind with no technology whatsoever, his phenomenology of technics demonstrates that the issue of embodiment is implicit in a diversity of interactions with technology, all of which carry a prosthetic quality whether or not being attached to the flesh and bone of human body. Nevertheless, both Ihde's discussion and Woodward's understanding of technology as prosthesis still address to a level on which the prosthetic quality of technology derives from issues of use- value and practicality. In that respect, the metaphor that Ihde has chosen for his technology criticism holds a second and much imperative possibility to contemplate further on the prosthetic quality of technology.

Accordingly, Ihde invites the reader to consider the earliest possible case of human life that is conditioned by technology. With his powerful metaphor of Garden of Eden, he argues that when Adam and Eve were condemned

from the Garden and exiled to Earth, the problem of adaptation have necessitated the use of basic technics and simple tools which, however minimal, were to be the very first examples of technology (1990: 12-13). In other words, from the moment the abstract purity of the garden was left, the price of coming into Earth appeared to be taking up technology. Hence, Ihde's response to romantic claims of 'returning back to the heart of nature' as well as to dystopian accounts on technology is that man's *survival* without technology would simply be unthinkable both in empirical and historical sense.

Setting aside mankind's practical need of technology for his survival, could this example of Adam and Eve possibly lead to another level for considering the prosthetic quality of technology? For Adam and Eve are the key figures of the narrative of Genesis in all holy books, a further look at the religious accounts of the story reveals interesting connections between the ontological status of mankind and its possible effect on the prosthetic aspect of technology.

As stated in holy books, Adam and Eve- before the commitment of the original sin, enjoy an immortal life among other angels in the Garden of Eden, the heavenly

perfection of which leaves no need or petition unanswered. Yet, the price Adam and Eve pay for eating the forbidden fruit is the extinction of their angelic quality which is revealed first by the appearance of sexual organs in their body and then, their being exiled to Earth as mortal beings<sup>2</sup>. In other words, the exile from the Garden to Earth is equally a radical *transfer* from a pure and omnipotent state of being to becoming human, a state confronted with lack and delimited with the problem of mortality. Then, could it be argued that the subject's struggle with the state of human-ness, which is all about lack, fragmentation and mortality is manifested in his becoming a Prosthetic God that puts all his auxiliary organs, i.e. objects of technology? Hence, where would this transfer effect that stamps the exile from the Garden, coincide with the transfer effect that stamps the constitution of subjecthood? What would becoming a "Prosthetic God" as Freud argues (SE XXI, 1986: 91-92)- or rather technology as prosthesis imply for the subject? A *return* to the Garden?

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<sup>2</sup> "Sin came into the world through one man and his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned." *New Testament*, Paul's Letter to Romans 5:12.

### CHAPTER 3. TECHNOLOGY AND THANATOS: THE UNUSUAL COUPLING IN QUESTION

At the biological level, the death instinct, in affirming the road to death, affirms at the same time the road of life: ripeness is all. At the human level, the repressed death instinct cannot affirm life by affirming death (...) death can only affirm itself by transforming itself into the force which always denies life, the spirit of Goethe's Mephistopheles (Brown, 1985: 103).

While the issue of death is often brought up as a condition of the question of prosthesis in Wills' discussion (1995: 128; 143, 1998: 10; 14, Gunn: 1996), what it implies for the construction of subjecthood in psychoanalytic terms is even more significant to question the prosthetic quality of technology. In that respect, Freudian discussion on Thanatos and an alternative reading of Freudian theory of instincts by Norman O. Brown (1985) are explored in this chapter, in

order to suggest a relation between the operation of Thanatos on the subject's level and technology as prosthesis. Through a dialectic and not dualistic interpretation of Eros and Thanatos, the retrospective program of death instincts is pictured to discuss the ways in which the prosthetic quality of technology serves for subject's denial of separation and loss on the psychical level.

### 3.1. Freudian Problematization of Instincts: Theory and Criticism

As evident in *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1909) and *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930; 1986), Freud's psychoanalysis has not been limited to theorizing the individual space of subject's mental life but has also sought for the reflections of various psychoanalytic phenomena in the realm of culture and society. In return, the social and scientific thought of his contemporary times have been equally reflected in Freud's writings and theory. From 18<sup>th</sup> century medicine to Comte and Fraser, influences and inspirations of biological and social evolutionism could well be traced in Freud's theory in which psychological development is pictured most of the

time as analogous to the biology of simple organism and earlier forms of social life. Among the works with such influence, *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920; 1961) appear as the two in which Freud's theory of instincts is developed in a similar fashion- yet welcomes a number of objections and diversities for the very same reason. With an evaluation of Freudian theory of instincts as well as its criticism, it becomes possible to demonstrate the psychoanalytical motives behind the subject's engagement with technology as prosthesis.

As "the representatives of all the forces originating in the interior of the body and transmitted to the mental apparatus" (Freud, 1961: 40), Freud defines the instinct " as an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things" (43). Accordingly, this borderland concept between the mental and biological, relies on three formal characteristics in Freudian theory. Firstly, instincts must be common to all the animal kingdom, yet secondly an ultimate dualism embedded in the nature itself must be reflected in the generality of instincts. Along with the third characteristics of instincts, i.e. a conservatism that aims the restoration of an earlier state, the theory of

instincts finds its true meaning in Freudian psychoanalysis. With an ambivalence in debt to the problem of repression on the human level, instincts are grounded on a mutual antagonism- a duality whose unbounded energy is amongst the basic sources of mental conflict and neurosis ( Freud, 1961: 41; Brown, 1985: 83). Although the introduction of narcissism have required a radical change in the formulation of the Freudian theory of instincts, dualism of the theory have still remained, providing one of the initial explanations for the question of repression in Freudian psychoanalysis.

With reference to the infamous 'love vs. hunger' theme of Romantic literature, the dichotomy of earlier theory of instincts have employed sexual instincts in opposition to those of self- preservation. As Freud explains in details in *Civilization and Its Discontents* as well as *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, further study on the libido has upset this first theory, since the recognition of the narcissistic character of sexual instincts has inexorably attached the narcissistic libido to self- preservation instincts (SE XXI, 1986: 117-118; 1961: 61-62). In other words, with the introduction of narcissism to deeper focus, instincts of self



preservation have become inseparable with the operations of libidinal- and therefore with sexual instincts, as well<sup>3</sup>. Yet unlike the Jungian approach in which an instinctual monism is established upon the libido, Freudian theory of instincts has come up with a new dualism around 1920s:

Let us suppose, then, that all organic instincts are conservative, are acquired historically and tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things. (...) Every modification which is thus imposed upon the course of organism's life is accepted by the conservative instincts and stored up for further repetition. Those instincts are therefore bound to give a deceptive appearance of being forces tending towards change and progress, whilst in fact they are merely seeking to reach an ancient goal by paths alike old and new (Freud, 1961: 45).

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<sup>3</sup> As Freud explains in *On Narcissism: An Introduction*: "Just as object- libido at first concealed ego- libido from our observation, so too in connection with the object- choice of infants (and of growing children) what we first noticed was that they derived their sexual objects from their experiences of satisfaction. The first auto-erotic sexual satisfactions are experienced in connection with vital functions which serve the purpose of self- preservation" (1914; SE XIV, 1986: 87).

While Freud's infamous quote "the aim of all life is death" (46), neatly expresses the instinctual conservatism issued in the passage above, the very same passage could nevertheless be taken as a foreseeing of the association between Eros and civilization that Freud would be suggesting later in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Nevertheless, an introduction concerning the new course of instincts does await in further pages of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as well. Life instincts [Eros] that are conservative in the sense of preserving life and death instincts [Thanatos] that are conservative in the sense of aiming at some past point of suspension (1961: 49). As another foreseeing of his later discussion on civilization and progress, Freud adds that it is only those life instincts that an urge for higher development would emerge from in order to reach the final goal of life smoothly- that is death (1961: 50- 51). Whereas with a formulation independent from the operations of libido, death instincts are issued to be retrograde in character for a return to an inanimate state. In this way, the dualist nature of theory of instincts is preserved once again.

However, it is *Civilization and Its Discontents* in which this final theory of instincts is thoroughly

looked at with reference to questions concerning civilization and progress. Dealing with the antagonism between the instincts and the program of civilization, the book equally pays attention to the mirror image of conscience in communal regulations and social thought, such as the entity of religion and/or ethics acting as some cultural super- ego on individuals and society. Although at the price of man's discontented-ness, it is the very same cultural super- ego and its social impositions that bring the question of civilization a step closer to Freud's theory of instincts. Exploring the history as well as the achievements of civilization with reference to the unconscious desires that are subject to super- ego and repression, Freud argues the energy and thus the labor of civilization and progress to be the sublimation of [repressed] Eros (SE XXI,1986: 108-110; Brown, 1985: 17). In addition, with this two fold activity of super- ego and sublimation of the repressed that the power of Eros to unite and form becomes speakable in the case of civilization. Accordingly, just as Eros seeks for a union with the objects of love on the individual's level, it equally brings about institutions of civilization and forms of unity among the members of society. Yet, the instincts of destruction, Thanatos is one big major obstacle to

the program of civilization, i.e. to the unity of mankind (SE XXI, 1986: 122). In that respect, all the material achievements of culture and progress, along with the institutions of civilization, are attributed to the force of Eros at work. While Freudian theory of instincts relies on the conservative nature of instincts as presented earlier, Eros appears to be a step away from such conservatism within this picture. Whereas Thanatos occurs to be associated implicitly with the conservatism at stake, becoming much closer to the idea of 'restoring the earlier form of life'.

As Boothby (1991) states, Freud's formulation of death instincts serves a lot more than the maintenance of his dualistic thinking only. Shedding light to the origins of human aggressiveness and the enigma of super-ego, the question of death instincts have also brought new theoretical opportunities for investigating the operation of desire on the 'other' (Boothby, 1991: 4-7). True to the extent that from Freud's consideration of sado-masochism in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to Lacanian semiotics, a diversity of inquiries and implementations could be exemplified respectively. Still, the issue of death instincts have led to an equal amount of neglect and antipathy as well. A

misapplication of physical principles to living organisms for some, one the most common criticism to Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* has been the biological oxymoron embedded in his formulation of death instincts (Boothby, 1991: 75). For, if instincts employ a conservative nature and yet occur to be the most primordial forces of life at work for a living being, how could the process of growth be explained in organisms? Since the question of repression and struggle between instincts is obviously not plausible for such life forms, how could death as the goal of 'all' life be bought? Then, why does an immediate self-destruction remain unobserved in the biological cases on which Freud rests his death instinct argument?

Other criticism that the issue of death instincts meets is more theoretical with respect to gaps between Freud's recent theory of instincts and his older topography concerning the psychical agencies of ego and id. In a similar fashion, vagueness of the discussion concerning the quantitative management of tension and excitation within the Nirvana principle has been an equally argumentative point in Freud's theory of death instincts (Boothby, 1991: 76-78; Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988: 100). Since this final set of objections exceed

the limitations of this thesis, probably the most relevant piece of criticism for a critical evaluation of death instincts would come from Otto Rank:

even when he stumbled upon the inescapable death problem, [Freud] sought to give a new meaning to that also in harmony with the wish, since he spoke of death instinct instead of death fear. (...) If one had held to the phenomena, it would have been impossible to understand how a discussion of the death impulse could neglect the universal and fundamental death fear to such extent (Otto Rank, 1934 cited in Boothby, 1991:8).

When the strength of these and such criticism is multiplied with the apparent optimism embedded in Freud's association of progress and evolution with Eros, a theoretical demand to reconsider the Freudian theory of instincts as well as its dualistic structure becomes unavoidable. In that respect, Brown's reconsideration of the instinct theory provides the means to challenge the 'hygienic' boundaries between Eros and Thanatos, in addition to questioning the weight of death instincts in the realm of the social and cultural.

### 3.2. Eros vs. Thanatos? Towards a Dialectical Reading

Although Brown's *Life Against Death* (1985) does not totally share such criticism that announce Freudian Thanatos as some excessive theoretization, the book nevertheless stands in with Otto Rank's objection on the neglect of the element of 'fear' in Freud's formulation of death instincts. Therefore, with the claim of revitalizing Freudian theory of instincts that has long been overlooked, Brown attempts to reinterpret the human history accordingly, as an integral part of psychoanalysis. With references to history and social anthropology, the book focuses on the general neurosis of mankind and suggests the morbidity of human sociability and culture as originating from the incapacity to accept death. Rather than Freud's optimistic illustration of Eros, Brown's account employs a focus on the operations of Thanatos on social level- and such a focus inexorably demands a reconsideration of the theory of instincts.

While *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* has depicted the question of pleasure with respect to three headings that could be regarded as 'subsets' of death instincts, the enigma of what exactly death instincts refers to remains still in Freudian theory. Such an enigma that becomes

only less obscure when Thanatos is to be defined simply as the negation of Eros. However from Brown's perspective, the question of death regains its ontological weight in addition to its implementations in the realm of psychoanalysis. Advancing Freud's definition of death instincts as those that intend a return to the inanimate state, Brown relates the operation of Thanatos to an urge to deny the painful experience of separation which intrudes on the primal experience with one-ness with the world. With Brown's problematization, the question of Thanatos does not point to a desire for death but instead, to an illusion of everlasting life that is grounded on the incapacity to accept death and separation (1985: 95; 100-103; 115). In other words, what is at stake with Thanatos is not an issue of death as itself merely, but rather life which inevitably and *dialectically* implies the problem of death. On the other hand, Freudian Eros- Thanatos dualism as well as his optimistic analysis of civilization with reference to Eros and Eros only, remains incompatible with such a dialectical ambivalence. Even when Freud seems to keep the door open for a possible reconciliation between the two instincts, it is again his optimistic analysis that relies on a predominance of Eros over the destructive force of Thanatos (SE XXI, 1986: 119). Then, it becomes



rightful to question why the issue of death could be avoided so lightly and easily.

In order to challenge the incompatibility of the dualism that marks the Freudian theory of instincts, Brown's further inquiry regards the instinctual operations behind the issues of sublimation and repetition-compulsion. Since the theoretical difficulty rooted in the question of sublimation is immense enough to be treated in some other study, what could be mentioned briefly at this point is Freud's underestimation of the effect of Thanatos in the case of sublimation. Accordingly, Brown's criticism to the Freudian problematization of sublimation targets the respective claims on the desexualization of bodily Eros and its socialization in return. For Freud, sublimation has been a frustration-free way out of repression instead of a plain effect of it. Different from a sacrifice of pleasure, the energy of sublimation occurs to be desexualized Eros as a tamed source of pleasure won from the hostile reality of disappointed infantile sexuality (Brown, 1985: 139). However, Brown finds this ambiguous relation between repression and sublimation rather weak. If one of the initial concepts regarding the infantile sexuality is the problematic of repression

and if sublimation has got to do with the very same infantile sexuality, then how could sublimation guarantee the avoidance of repression in full terms? Brown argues that it is instead the ambivalent nature of negation that shapes the operation of sublimation. With the ambivalence due to both the denial and some distorted affirmation of object- loss, the negation at stake programs sublimation as a continuance of infantile *dreaming*, as a reenactment of primal fantasies (Brown, 1985: 160- 163). Beyond Brown's preference to mention infantile dreaming rather than infantile sexuality, there lies his suggestion to consider the work of Thanatos in the problematic of sublimation:

If the mechanism of sublimation is the dream, the instinctual economy which sustains it is a primacy of death over life in the ego. The path which leads from infantile dreaming to sublimation originates in the ego's incapacity to accept the death of separation, and its inauguration of those morbid forms of dying-negation, repression, and narcissistic involution (Brown, 1985: 173).

In other words, the entropy of sexuality that direct the course of sublimation is plausible for Brown while its formulation with prior reference to Eros would miss the ambivalent relation between the implications of objects-loss and negation that occur on the subject's level. Instead of a linear connection between Eros and sublimation, Brown offers a possibility in which the dialectic relation between the two sets of instincts would bring the question of Thanatos a step closer to the explanation of psychical phenomena involved in sublimation<sup>4</sup>. Within that frame, further criticism on the optimistic Eros- civilization coupling of Freudian theory becomes possible as well.

Before going any further with Brown's criticism, it should be underlined that when Brown trades a dualism of instincts for a dialectic approach, his aim is far away from reversing the Freudian theory and announcing Thanatos as *the* instinctual force- for that would be a reestablishment of some other dualism back again. On the contrary, Brown's alternative reading of Freudian theory could be regarded as an attempt to criticize the ways in

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<sup>4</sup>Additionally, Laplanche and Pontalis cite E.Jones to note that Freudian theory nevertheless considers a possibility for exploring

which the social and cultural achievements are explained only with reference to some psychical management of sexual energy embedded in Eros. Brown rather suggests to bring the problematic of death up to fronts, reconsider its implications in psychical agenda of the individual subject and trace the respective program of Thanatos in the realm of social and historical. As a result, his inquiry offers a pluralist reading of instinctual forces, their possible interaction -as well as evidential conflict which could be grasped only with a dialectical understanding of Eros and Thanatos.

In addition to the instinctual ambivalence about the question of sublimation, Brown takes into hand the issue of repetition- compulsion to discuss the ways in which the history of civilization and progress is in debt to the problematic of Thanatos. Different from the static formulation of the relation between Eros and sublimation, the theme of instinctual conservatism in Freudian theory does allow for such a discussion. Accordingly Freud states that, the elementary and primitive nature of repetition- compulsion, which is evident in all social life, overrides the pleasure principle and remains as a basic principle of instinctual conservatism (1961: 24-25). Yet the dynamics of repetition- compulsion suggest

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the weight of death instincts in the problematic of sublimation

an interesting point to consider the history of social evolution and cultural progress as well. With respect to the fixation to some unpleasurable experience and the unconscious quest for the attainment of pleasure in its future repetition, could it be argued that the history of civilization is about a related compelling of mankind, to seek some ultimate experience in the future for the recovery of the past?

The study of repetition- compulsion suggests that repression generated historical time by generating an instinct- determined fixation to the repressed past, and thus setting in motion a forward- moving dialectic which is at the same time an effort to recover that past. (...) In our new perspective the crucial psychoanalytical concept is the repression of death (Brown, 1985: 103).

Then the history of mankind for Brown is marked by the repressed reality of mortality which brings about culture and civilization at the price of some neurotic attempt to fight against death (Brown, 1985: 92- 94; 101). For what is at stake with death instincts is not some wish or desire for death, but a denial of mortality that is

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(Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988: 433- 434).

rooted in the dialectics of being, repetition- compulsion addresses an attempt towards the future in order to paralyze that dialectics- and possibly to return to or re-establish what is lost in a manner similar to the element of negation in fort- da game. Following Brown, if repetition- compulsion could be regarded as the Thanatos element that is involved in the course of civilization, could mankind's engagement with material culture and technology be issued with a similar problematization? Undoubtedly, Brown's dialectics of instincts opens way to explore what the question of Thanatos would offer for cultural and social analysis as well as suggesting possible relations between different pieces of Freudian theory that require an explanation other than the work of libido and/or Eros itself only.

### 3.3. Technology as Prosthesis: In Service of Death Instincts

By the end of Chapter 2, a number of questions concerning Ihde's metaphor of Garden of Eden have been raised, to suggest a linkage between the prosthetic quality of technology: Where would Adam and Eve's exile to Earth- a transfer from a state of omnipotence and

immortality to the state of human-ness, coincide with the transfer effect that stamps the construction of subjecthood? The aim of this question has been to imply that technology as prosthesis serves for a return to the Garden, a state lost in the past whose recovery is sought in the wanders of becoming a prosthetic God. With the evaluation of Brown's dialectics of instincts, it has now become possible to trace the retrospective program of Thanatos in human- technology interactions and ascribe the work of death instincts to the prosthetic quality of technology from a psychoanalytical perspective.

Since Freud announces the use of tools as "the first acts of civilization" in *his Civilization and Its Discontents* (SE XXI, 1986: 90), a faithful reading of Freudian theory of instincts would simply forbid such an association between Thanatos and [the prosthetic quality of] technology. For Freud, mankind's dreams of omnipotence and omniscience have been inspired by gods as the cultural ideals (91) while the energy that brings such a dream closer to reality is the sublimation of [repressed] Eros in the case of civilization. Following Brown's criticism however, psychical dynamics behind technology as prosthesis has suggested a rather different perspective from which such a smooth operation of Eros

could well be challenged. With the definition of death instincts as a denial of mortality and separation, the program of Thanatos has been issued to be a return to a state which, metaphorically speaking, promises the reinstatement of the lost omnipotence at the price of 'rewinding' life that dialectically brings about death and separation as well. In other words, Thanatos would not affirm life as some progression towards death- which is the aim of all life according to Freud, but rather affirm a retrospective program to reach the immortal and unbounded state that obviously has little to do with life itself. Because it is the body, the morbid flesh and bone of which is the pure manifestation of the wreckage called subjecthood, the program of Thanatos reveals itself mostly in the implications of technology as prosthesis for the human body:

(...) since life is of the body, fantasy as the negation of life must negate bodily organs, so that there can be no fantasy without negation-alteration of the body (Brown, 1985: 164).

In other words, no matter how much the word technology recalls in one's mind 'progression' and no matter how



much the word 'prosthesis' recalls for the issue of supplementarity for some actual loss, the program of Thanatos necessarily requires an interference with body as the castle of morbid death. Hence technology, is nothing if not a pool of prostheses that alter and modify the body- the surface of subjecthood- to equip it for omnipotence. Accordingly, the seemingly progressive steps of technology could equally be argued as those in a repetitive- compulsive fashion that seek for ways to reinstate the omnipotence lost during the psychical changes that mark the construction of subjecthood. Yet, with respect to the fixation of some unpleasurable experience and the unconscious quest for the attainment of pleasure in its future repetition, the element of repetition- compulsion in technology addresses to its prosthetic character in two ways. While the flesh and bone of human body, along with its perception and senses, are being altered and modified with constant interference of technology, man becoming prosthetic God occurs to be going through that ultimately unpleasurable experience of fragmentation, separation and alienation. In the mean time though, the pleasure sought in this pattern is a matter of re-storing and accommodation in the sense of Wills' prosthetic operations: becoming a prosthetic assemblage in both psychical and bodily sense for the re-

establishment of the omnipotence during subject's experience of death, separation, fragmentation. For prosthesis is a matter of rapid transfer, what technology as prosthesis suggests is no different: a transfer that implies re-storing and accommodation yet a retrospective transfer in the service of death instincts to reinstate what is lost in the past.

As Wills' discussion concerning his surprise to recognizing that the pediatric, prosthetic and sexual health centers of his hometown one next to another, has indicated (1998: 16), the weight of the problematic of prosthesis is immense for the construction of subjecthood and its psychical agenda. Since Brown's alternative reading on the Freudian theory of instincts has enabled to consider the hallmarks of this agenda with respect to Thanatos as well, what these imply in terms of the problems of separation and lost omnipotence shall now be explored in order to discuss the psychical moments that ascribe a prosthetic quality to technology.

#### CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSING PROSTHESIS AS A PSYCHOANALYTIC CONCEPT: THE CASE OF *SANDMAN* AND BEYOND

Primitive narcissism feels itself primarily threatened by the ineluctable destruction of the self. (...) The idea of death, therefore, is denied by a duplication of the self incorporated in the shadow or in the reflected image (Otto Rank, 1934 cited in Menaker, 1982: 95).

If the prosthetic quality of technology is shaped by the work of Thanatos, which psychical moments could be regarded as those that address to the problems of death and separation as some loss of omnipotence on the subject's level? Deriving from E.T.A. Hoffmann's story *The Sandman* (1817; 1982), this chapter focuses on the construction of subjecthood with respect to issues of death and separation that mark the infantile sexuality. In addition, the concept of doppelgänger is respectively explored to question the value of the prosthetic quality of technology for subject's fight against death.

#### 4.1. E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Sandman*: The Story

The story *Sandman* begins with an exchange of three letters between the main protagonist Nathanael, his friend Lothar and Lothar's sister Klara. The first of these letters comes from Nathanael and is about his encounter with a strange barometer dealer named Coppola, who has raised an uncanny feeling regarding such childhood memories that Nathanael has struggled to come over for a long time. Through the letter, Nathanael takes a journey back to his childhood and tells the fearsome story of Sandman, a figure that tragically changed Nathanael's life once and for all.

Accordingly, Nathanael's family used to be a peaceful one, enjoying evenings all together in his father's study to listen to the stories he would tell every night before the children's bedtime. However, some nights around nine o'clock, Nathanael's mother anxiously sends the children to bed, telling them that the Sandman is by the stairs of the house, coming up. And when little Nathanael asks "Oh, Mama, who is this nasty Sandman who always drives us away from Papa?", "My dear child, there is no Sandman" his mother would answer. "When I tell you that the Sandman is coming, it only means that you are

sleepy and can't keep your eyes open any longer, as though someone had sprinkled sand into them." (Hoffmann, 1982: 278) Yet, the nanny of the children would give a rather different account of the Sandman:

He is a wicked man who comes to children when they refuse to go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes till they bleed and pop out of their heads. Then he throws the eyes into a sack and takes them to the half-moon as food for his children, who sit in a nest and have crooked beaks like owls with which they pick up the eyes of human children who have been naughty (1982: 279).

Although his fear of Sandman makes Nathanael lose much of a sleep, the little boy nevertheless burns with curiosity to see what Sandman really looks like. Putting himself together one night, he sneaks into his father's study after nine o'clock and awaits to see the Sandman. What Nathanael witnesses however, turns out to be more than what he expects. The Sandman who disturbs the peace of their casual family evenings is nobody other than his father's friend Coppelius, a German lawyer that the children of the house never favored much for his hideous

looks and rudeness towards children. Unaware of their being watched by the young boy, Nathanael's father and Coppelius carry out some bizarre experiment-like doings, smoke and fire fill the room. Hearing Coppelius bleating "Give me eyes! Give me eyes!" as he furiously hammers piece of coals that look like children faces with no eyes but deep black cavities instead, Nathanael tumbles from his hiding place to the floor with horror. His father rescues Nathanael's eyes from Coppelius yet the beast man unscrews the boy's body, putting his arms and feet here and there. Horrified with what he has witnessed and traumatized with what has happened to his body, Nathanael loses his conscious. With his mother's care, he manages to recover the emotional trauma days after and never hears a word of the Sandman for a long time. The next and last visit of Coppelius to the family would happen a year later and result with a mysterious explosion in the study room, costing the life of Nathanael's father.

While the fearful memories never seem to leave the little boy alone, years go by and young Nathanael becomes a university student living in another city. He grows a keen interest in literature, gets engaged with Lothar's sister Klara and lives a quiet life until his strange encounter with this barometer dealer named

Coppola. Disturbed by the uncanny similarity between the old Coppelius and the dealer Coppola, Nathanael's sleep becomes uneasy again. Could Coppola possibly be the Sandman? Could he possibly be back after all these years? The young man finally decides to write all this to his dear friend Lothar.

As Nathanael accidentally posts this letter to his fiancée instead of Lothar, the second letter comes from Klara. Being a commonsensical girl, Klara tries her best to give reasonable explanations to what Nathanael has written and pays no credit for his belief in some creature called Sandman. In hope for soothing Nathanael with her words, Klara pictures this Coppola man as nothing much than an ordinary pushy dealer. After receiving a response from Klara to his surprise, Nathanael writes the third and final letter to Lothar again. He admits to his friend that perhaps he has been a little too puzzled in the labyrinths of his childhood memories. Learning that Coppola the dealer is an Italian friend of his teacher from the university, Prof. Spalanzini, Nathanael promises Lothar to close this subject once and for all. He ends the letter with a little mention of Prof. Spalanzani's daughter, Olympia that he has seen in professor's house lately. Seeing

Olympia sitting in silence with fixed eyes, yet not even showing a single sign of noticing Nathanael's presence in the room, he has wondered what might possibly wrong with her. Telling Lothar about the uneasy feeling aroused by this weird state of the girl, Nathanael writes "it seemed to me as if she were sleeping with her eyes open" (1982: 288).

After this exchange of letters, Nathanael visits his hometown and meets Lothar and Klara. Yet, his fears about the return of the Sandman shadow this visit and cause some arguments between the three. Still, Nathanael feels contented among people he cares for. Their love and support soon convince him that the dealer Coppola's being Coppelius/Sandman could only be his imagination. When Nathanael returns to his university town with a relieved mind, he finds out that, his house has been burned down during his visit and friends have carried his belongings to another house opposite to Prof. Spalanzini's. Nathanael from then on, lives in a house that has the complete view of the room where Spalanzini's strange daughter Olympia sits silently by herself all day. Deeply touched by Klara's love and support for him, Nathanael does not pay much attention to the girl, though he has long been surprised by the perfection of her posture.



However, the peaceful days of Nathanael do not last for long. One day when writing a letter to his dear Klara, he hears a soft tap on the door and calls in. There appears Coppola in front him with all the shock and horror he gives to Nathanael. Trying to keep himself calm and remembering what Spalanzini told about Coppola's Italian roots, Nathanael only tries to avoid the dealer, telling him that he needs no barometers. "Oh, no barometer? No barometer! I gotta da eyes too. I gotta da nice eyes!" replies back Coppola and instantly puts handful of eyeglasses on the table. "So, glasses- put on nose, see? These are my eyes, nice-a eyes!" (1982: 296). By the time the whole table begins to gleam and sparkle with glasses, Nathanael becomes terrified with the scene and seizes Coppola from his arm to make him stop putting even more glasses. Since the only way to make amends for his behavior seems to buy something from the man, Nathanael chooses nicely finished pocket spyglasses. As he looks through the window to test them, he realizes the sharpness of the vision these glasses give. With an involuntary look towards Olympia's room, he now sees the exquisite features of her face. Even her fixed eyes appear to be inflaming with ever-increasing life. In time, gazing into Olympia's room with these spyglasses becomes Nathanael's new occupation. Lost in the divine

beauty of her perfect figure, Nathanael forgets about Sandman, just as he forgets his Klara.

Only later Nathanael finds the perfect opportunity to meet Olympia and that occurs to be a great party given in Spalanzini's. Hearing the rumors that this would be the first occasion in which Spalanazini is to introduce Olympia to the society, Nathanael goes to the party with great excitement. Looking at her through his spyglasses and amazed by Olympia's talents in playing the piano and how she throws every note so precisely when she sings, Nathanael falls in love with her. Among the laughters of people around them, Nathanael even has one little dance with his Olympia. By the time the night ends, Nathanael's love for her has grown even stronger.

Encouraged by Spalanzini himself during the party, Nathanael begins to pay visits to Professor's house to see Olympia as much as possible. During these visits, he finds a splendid listener for his poems. Although not speaking much other than "ah, ah!", Olympia's ceaseless look into Nathanael's eyes makes the young man think that he has never been paid this much attention and understanding from Klara or Lothar or from any other person before. While the whole town rumors about Olympia, such as how she stood lifelessly in the party and how

funnilly she danced like some dim-witted puppet, the young lover simply ignores them all. Nathanael indifferently keeps his visits until that day when he decides to propose Olympia his mother's ring as a symbol of his love and devotion. Taking the stairs to Spalanzini's, the unusual sounds coming from the house catch his attention. The shouting he hears would belong to nobody but terrible Coppelius and Spalanzini. When Nathanael rushes into the room, he is shocked by the vision of his dear Olympia being tugged and twisted by the two in every possible direction. As Coppelius grabs her and runs downstairs, Nathanael sees Olympia bumping and rattling woodenly on every step with no eyes but empty black holes on her face. She is a lifeless doll. Devastated and speechless with horror, Nathanael hears Spalanzini shouting "Coppelius- Coppelius has stolen my best automaton. (...) The eyes- the eyes stolen from you! (...) Get me Olympia! Bring back Olympia! There are the eyes!" (1982: 304). Soon after Nathanael recognizes a pair of eyes staring at him from the floor, Spalanzini throws them to Nathanael. "Then madness racked Nathanael with scorching claws, ripping to shreds his mind and senses" (1982: 304).

Opening his eyes in his own bed with the vision of Klara, Lothar and his mother by his side, Nathanael once

again depends on the support of his beloved ones for recovery. With the help of good fortune, he manages to do so and gets together with Klara back again. However, when Nathanael takes that walk to the tower of the town hall with Klara and Lothar, his peaceful days has come to an end again and yet for the last time. As Klara points down to the city "Just look at that strange little grey bush. (...) It really seems to be coming towards us", Nathanael takes out his spyglasses. What he sees in front of him is Klara with eyes rolling with streams of fire. When Nathanael seizes Klara harshly to throw her off the tower, Lothar catches his sister barely on time and saves her. Catching the sight of Coppelius down in the middle of the curious crowd, Nathanael suddenly jumps to his death, screaming "Ah, nice-a eyes, nice-a eyes!" (1982: 304).

#### 4.2. The Psychical Course Behind Prosthesis: The Analysis of Selected Themes from *The Sandman*

While one of the strengths of Freud's *The Uncanny* (1919; SE XVII, 1986) is the formulation of super-ego as an agent working against the rest of the ego, observing and criticizing it like some double (SE XVII, 1986: 235),

the main theme of the paper is Freud's inquiry on the concept of uncanny and castration anxiety as its universal source. Taking the uncanny as a feeling aroused by the return of something familiar which has been repressed formerly, Freud turns to E.T.A. Hoffman's story *The Sandman* (1817; 1982) to explore the effect of the repressed infantile complexes in the arousal of the uncanny. However, his aim to ascribe a properly universal source of effect to the problem of uncanny, leads to a rather thematic reading of *The Sandman* with a deliberate disregard paid to the element of intellectual uncertainty in the story. Claiming that the realm of repressed is of equal and universal significance for the psychical development of every human subject, Freud announces the element of intellectual uncertainty as rather incompatible and therefore negligible in his inquiry for the uncanny (SE XVII, 1986: 226; 230; 232-233). Especially with the powerful figure of Sandman who tears out children's eyes, the story, according to Freud, suggests a much plausible source to assume the universality of the uncanny: that is, the castration anxiety (SE XVII, 1986: 231).

Yet, Kofman (1991) gives a critical account of Freud's exclusive reference to castration anxiety in the

analysis of *The Sandman* for the issue of intellectual uncertainty is equally resourceful in terms of problematizing the uncanny. Questioning Freud's intentional ignorance on this element embedded in the theme of automaton- the doll Olympia, Kofman rather suggests a pluralist reading of the story with reference to both of the themes at stake. In Kofman's alternative analysis of the story, castration anxiety and doppelgänger appear as two problematics interrelated with respect to the fall of primary narcissism and subsequent operation of death instincts. Respectively, another account of the story by Weber (2000) develops a discussion on the lack of maternal phallus and its relation to the collapse of subject's self- image as whole and intact. With selected themes of perspektiv, doppelgänger and castration, Kofman and Weber suggest a rather different approach towards the issue of uncanny as well as a diverse reading of *The Sandman*.

Although Sandman appears as the castrating father figure from the very beginning of the story, Nathanael's true recognition of the castration threat comes with his witnessing of the *Urzene*- the diabolic double of the maternal birth scene taking place in his father's study. Accordingly, what Nathanael has viewed and expressed as

pieces of coals that seem as if "faces (...) but eyeless faces, with horrible black cavities instead" (Hoffmann, 1982: 282) could be regarded as the boy's original encounter with the absence of maternal phallus. For the story of castration is a confrontation to the child's confidence in the ubiquity of the male sexual organ, recognition of the lack of maternal phallus could equally be taken as the moment in which castration anxiety is experienced in the image of the mother as 'mutilated' (Weber, 2000: 215-216; Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988: 285). Additionally, Nathanael's being unscrewed by Coppélius strengthens the element of castration anxiety in the story- all of which in return lead to the collapse of Nathanael's "narcissistic conception of the body as a matrix for the ego: self- contained, unified, integrated" (Weber, 2000:15). After that decisive moment, the operation of death instincts becomes speakable. Since "castration is precisely the impossibility of seeing directly (...) for it is always off to the side" (224), eyes being the ultimate substitute for sexual organs in the story, have become the only means for reinstating a [secondary] narcissistic self- image through duplication and dead representatives. That is the themes of *perspektiv* and *doppelgänger* in the story *Sandman*.

Deriving from the German equivalent of the word glass, Weber puts forth that the word 'perspektiv' has been used in German to refer to many optical devices that are used for supplementing the organ of sight, to unite and organize the perspective on a clearer basis. Yet the story of castration shares more than a lot with the impossible desire behind perspektiv which, according to Weber, is the aim of making the invisible visible to discover everywhere as the same. In other words, Weber relates castration anxiety with some deeply rooted ocular anxiety to discover the ubiquity of the male sexual organ (2000: 18). However, what is uncanny with perspektiv is that the inevitability of any prosthetic supplement including optical devices, brings about the very counter facet of such an aim as well. "What prosthesis brings closer is the inescapability of *separation*", the impossibility of a properly ordered, self-contained perspective [point of view] as well as the impossibility of an undisturbed and defragmented bodily reality (18-19). While Nathanael's use of Coppola's spyglasses has made him think that "never in his life had he come across a glass that brought objects before his eyes with such clarity and distinctness" (Hoffmann, 1882: 297), what the prosthetic supplement inescapably has led to, soon becomes a tragedy. As



Nathanael grasps his glasses to see properly "that strange little grey bush" that Klara has pointed to, what he is confronted with is the appearance of Klara's image in front of the glasses, with eyes rolling and streaming fire (Hoffmann, 1982: 307). In other words, *perspektiv* or rather, his optical *prosthesis* might have promised the reinstatement of the omnipresence of the male sexual organ, but has revealed once again the fall of human body as a self-contained entity. To refer to Wills here, every prosthesis either as an auxiliary organ or as a psychical supplement 'complementary' to the unitary self-image of the subject, inexorably discloses that the whole was never anywhere for every entity is constructed within the nonintegrality of prosthetic contrivances (Wills, 1995: 15).

Weber's account on the theme of *perspektiv* makes it possible to consider the implications of such an ocular anxiety for the subject's prosthetic engagement with objects of technology. Yet, the theme of *doppelgänger* in the story *Sandman* provides other means to contemplate further on the psychical dynamics behind the prosthetic quality of technology. In a similar fashion with Weber, Kofman too argues that Nathanael's traumatic encounter with the absence of maternal phallus have defeated the

narcissistic self- conception concerning the unity and entirety of the body. From another perspective though, Kofman points to Nathanael's afterward involvement with doubles that serve for his quest to recover his wounded self- perception. For Kofman, the lifeless automaton Olympia appears to be Nathanael's narcissistic double, a frigid, lifeless figure that Nathanael treats as a mirror to reflect himself upon (Kofman, 1991: 142-143). True to the extent that in *The Uncanny*, Freud mentions the doll Olympia as Nathanael's double as well as the means that provide the establishment of some [secondary] narcissism for the poor Nathanael (SE XVII, 1986: 232). However, with other instances of doppelgänger in the story- such as Nathanael's keen interest in literature as a substitute for life, Kofman underlines the work of death instincts in close relation to the problem of double (Kofman, 1991: 140-141). Reminding that it is Nathanael himself who gives life to his double, believing in Olympia's vividness whenever he starts to read his poems, Kofman argues that:

Nathanael can only create by artificial means,  
by mimesis, by mimicking or doubling life: a  
power of representation, of vision, of division

which belongs to the *death instincts*, not to *Eros* (143-144 emphasis added).

Another instance Kofman picks to represent the relation between the work of Thanatos and the mimicry of life through dead representatives is the satanic sorcery that Nathanael's father and Advocate Coppelius have done in the beginnings of the story. In this diabolic mimesis in which the seeds of artificial life are the eyes and eye sockets are the mother's fertile womb, what is observed is the reenactment of the primal scene of the maternal birth. However, Kofman states that this is such an attempt that is doomed to fail for it is always already a work of death (145-148). Returning to the lifeless automaton Olympia, Kofman makes a neat comment on work of death, a comment more than just generous to consider the problem of technology as prosthesis and to question its promises for the mortal and thus, fragmented subject:

The double is neither living nor dead: designed to supplement the living, to perfect it, to make it immortal like the Creator, it is always 'the harbinger of death'. (...) By creating what he hopes are immortal doubles, man tries to conceal the fact that death is always already

present in life. The feeling of uncanny that arises from the double stems from the fact that it cannot but evoke what man tries in vain to forget (148).

With such a brief analysis of the themes selected from the story *Sandman*, the psychical moments in the journey of subjecthood have been depicted in a way to provide the motivations behind subject's engagement with prosthetic supplements, technology in our case. Deriving from Kofman's passage above, one final account on the problem of doppelgänger and its relation to the issue of prosthesis awaits in order to question to what extent the prosthetic quality of technology could fulfill its promises for the human subject.

#### 4.3. Affirmative or Uncanny? Technology and The Double Character of Prosthesis

Although the English equivalent for the word doppelgänger, double is argued to be a rather weak translation, Menaker (1982) notes that Otto Rank's employment of the word brings closer the ambivalence embedded in doppelgänger. Defining the double as "a

projection of some part of the self which the individual can love or reject or feel comforted by the belief in its perpetuity" (Otto Rank 1934 cited in Menaker, 1982: 95), Rank refers to a number of possible projections that makes doppelgänger speakable. Evident in numerous mythological narratives, doppelgänger could operate as a projection of some undesired split-off; or in relation to aspirations and wishes concerning the self-perception; or as a projection with the aim of defense and protection of oneself. A shadow in one time, a mirror image in other, Rank suggests that doppelgänger acts within a narcissistic fashion in relation to the issues concerning self integrity (95).

With Rank's discussion, the issue of death becomes once more the essential problem for understanding these and such operations of the double as he notes: "the issue of death, is denied by a duplication of the self incorporated in the shadow or in the reflected image" (95). Focusing on this aim of maintaining perpetuity of the self, Rank suggests that the issue of double is embedded in the very creation of culture and civilization, as a search for the immortal soul. However, regarding the relation of doppelgänger to the problem of death, Freud brings forth ambivalent nature of

doppelgänger in his *The Uncanny* (SE XXI, 1986). While assigning the idea of the double to the primary narcissism, he more or less agrees with Otto Rank that doppelgänger might well appear in every possible developmental stage and could even receive a fresh meaning in later walks of life (SE XXI, 1986: 235). Still, doppelgänger as some preservation or an insurance against the power of death, takes a different twist with the passing of primary narcissism. According to Freud, as much as it is an assurance of immortality during the early stages of psychical development, the double would soon become "a harbinger of death" with the collapse of primary narcissism (235).

Within that perspective, this ambivalence of doppelgänger appears to be displaying a sheer resemblance with the problematic of prosthesis as well. As earlier discussion on the issue of prosthesis have indicated, Wills does not take prosthesis as some mere supplement to the human body, but as a rapid transfer that reveals what has always already been there for every entity based on the assumptions of self-acclaimed unity and integrity. That is the problem of non-integrality for every possible entity: the crisis of order, unity and accommodation that is tried to be soothed with many

operations which are prosthetic by definition. In that case, prosthesis by and large does not operate much different than doppelgänger and the promises of omnipotence and omniscience behind the prosthetic quality of technology is equally questionable. Since Weber and Kofman have indicated, the dilemma of fragmentation, collapse and death is always there even when some prosthetic devices or doubles are concerned. As Freud states, doppelgänger is always already the harbinger of death. And so is the prosthetic quality of technology.

Although the story *Sandman* has shown both ends of the problem of doppelgänger, i.e. Olympia as a narcissistic double for Nathanael and perspektiv as an uncanny indicator of fragmentation, much contemporary accounts on technology might well represent how this double character of prosthesis operates in mankind's involvement with technology as prosthesis. One of those accounts on the affirmative facet of the double in the case of technology as prosthesis would come from the realm of cyberpunk literature in which, prosthesis is more than just a common theme. With a committed focus on many cult novels of cyberpunk literature, McCarron (1995) notes that the flesh and bone of the 'natural' body is no more than an accident in such novels, illustrated as

always already exposed to the risk of crash, collapse, ageing and mortality. Cyberpunk literature in other words, could well be characterized with an overwhelmingly negative approach towards the organic body. Whereas with artificial organ transplants and the fusion of flesh and steel, prosthetic invasion of the human body happens to be the ultimate promise of cyberpunk technology in which the perfection of cyborg equals to more than just an abolishment of the organics. Healthy and robust bodies supplemented, occur to be the doubles that promise mankind the road to immortality (McCarron, 1995: 262-269).

On the other hand, such an utopian depiction of prosthetized technology as an affirming double, is not totally shared by every example of cyberpunk culture. Picking examples from popular science fiction movies and television programs, Wilson (1995) demonstrates the other side of the story: the uncanniness of the double in the case of high-tech machines and body prostheses. Since such machines as well as prostheses constantly imply the possibility of accident, corruption and dismemberment that our mortal presence embeds, these may well and does lead to a feeling of abject, an arousal of fears and anxieties that go back as early as the encounter with the



castration threat. As machines and especially medical prostheses can be assembled and disassembled, put on and off, attached and detached, they signify not only the delicacy of the organic body but also that of the subject's illusion concerning self- integrity of the body. (Wilson, 1995: 242- 250).

Consequently, although the prosthetic quality of technology builds up and multiplies bodily and perceptive capacities of mankind, an unconscious pursuit for the recovery of lost omnipotence in the promises of technology is inescapably arrested in the double character of prosthesis- and technology as well. While the prosthetic quality of technology serves the death instincts for the recovery of the omnipotence lost during the early course of infantile development, it equally brings the related anxieties back to the surface of human body. In that respect, even if the prosthetic value of technology for the human subject could still be plausible within the theoretical framework of our discussion, its double character makes it rather questionable to what extent mankind's prosthetic involvement with technology would exalt him to the stars.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Conclusive Remarks on the Impossible Program of Technology as Prosthesis

The inquest of this thesis has been to problematize technology as prosthesis which serves the aim of recollecting omnipotence and imaginary unity that the psychoanalytical subject has lost in the course of his psychical development. Deriving from a critical conceptualization of prosthesis, selected series of psychoanalytical concepts and discussions [of and about castration anxiety, double/doppelgänger and death instincts] have been scrutinized in order to discuss the offerings of the prosthetic quality of technology for subject's self- image as whole and intact.

True that the psychical structure of loss upon which the contrivance of subjecthood is constructed, inexorably feeds itself with the fantasy of self- acclaimed unity and entirety of human body. With the ideological operations behind well- established dualisms, the proper

order of discursive categories and boundaries are kept alive, constantly produced and distributed for the maintenance of this fantasy. Yet as our discussion on the concept of prosthesis has suggested, the appeasement of respective anxieties equally demand prosthetic operations and relations which however, strangely confirm the solid presence of the very same anxieties as well as pointing to the impossibility of integrity and unity for any entity at stake. In the case of bodily and psychical relations of the human subject, one of these realms to seek for this two-folded operation of prosthesis has been put forth as technology. Yet, no matter how far technology could promise to take the subject in his retrospective journey for the reinstatement of the lost omnipotence, our inquiry so far has shown that the structure of loss remains invincible. For prosthesis explicitly carries its double character, man's becoming Prosthetic God is a project that is doomed to fail. Instead of an escape from the reality of death and separation, what lurks behind in this mirror image of Prosthetic God rather lingers to be the tragedy of Narcissus.

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